CHAPTER - IV

CONFLICT ASSESSMENT AND PEACE BUILDING
IN AFGHANISTAN

This chapter describes how Afghans think about peace and who are the perpetrators of violence. It assesses the conflict situation and brings forth the Afghan perception on peace and how they want to reconstruct the country.

The Afghan people are broken into pieces mentally by war, socially by movements fueling ethnic sentiments and politically by war lords and merchants who are involved in selling heroine and in arms deal. Rehabilitation projects are both implemented by the government by the foreign countries through their embassies and the international organizations for relief and recovery of livelihood. Very few initiatives were taken by the Afghan civil organizations and also the international organizations to promote peace among the communities. The Afghans social and economic life was put under severe pressure due to the Civil war commenced soon after the withdrawal of USSR, the mushroom growth of war lords, the political instability since 1996, drought, acute unemployment, withdrawal of support from Russia, the silence of USA after the withdrawal of USSR, migration of ethnic minorities to Pakistan and Iran as refugees to escape from the poverty, the self styled oppression brought to the Afghans by the Taliban, country being used by the terrorist movements named Al-Quida as a base to attack USA, the war going on till today between the established government and the anti government elements.
The participants are of the opinion that the Taliban are still active and are operating from Pakistan, ethnic war lords, criminals who are powerful with arms, International Forces and the drug traffickers cause violence. The Afghan Police, corrupted officials and the Afghan army are perpetrators of all violence and unrest in the country. The family conflicts, the ethnic differences according to the communities cause the least role in perpetuating violence. This opinion proves that the Afghans face conflicts at the macro level by the Anti government Forces like Taliban, the War lords who play a vital role in the present government and the people have suspicion over the International Forces who kill the innocent people in the encounter with the Anti government forces.
The communities rank poverty as the first acute problem and the reason for the conflict. The Afghans do not have good Medical Colleges and so the Afghan doctors cannot do surgery and so the Afghans all flung either to Pakistan or to India for surgeries. Those who cannot afford has no other go other than meet his or hers end. So Afghans put forth the poor health care facilities as the second factor for the conflict. Thirdly they look the Taliban movement as a threat since they are powerful and they operate from the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan and also infiltrate in to whole Afghanistan. The Taliban are against any worthy projects good for the community and so they have given the ultimatum that no dialogue till all the
foreign forces leave Afghanistan. Taliban are against education and any type of modern development. Fourthly the War lords and the criminals are threat to peace since they interfere any development projects and ask for their share in the project and so the Community Development Councils cannot take a independent decision in implementing the projects and do just to the project activities.

**FIGURE NO.9**

**CAUSES FOR DISPUTES IN THE COMMUNITY**

![Bar chart showing causes for disputes in the community]

**CONFLICT IN SHARING THE NATURAL RESOURCES**

The village communities face problems in sharing the fertile land for agriculture, distributing the water for irrigation; family disputes in dividing the land, the ethnic differences among the tribes are the major causes of unrest.

The Pasthoon ethnic majority community is of the opinion that the other ethnic tribes are traitors to Afghanistan and they have no right to be in Afghanistan. At the same time the non Pasthoon
communities are of the opinion that Afghanistan was destroyed by the Pasthoon communities and they oppress them in dominating in the natural resources like sharing of water from the canals, not allowing the shepherd in the graze land where they were grazing before the war and supporting the Taliban movement to revive in Afghanistan and cause for all violent incidents.

The disputes begin in sharing the pasture land between the shepherds. The land disputes and water disputes culminate in ethnic conflict. For example the farmers in the upper portion of the White river block the water and do not let the water in to the canal for the other villages and this lead to unrest among the village communities. The war lords and the drug traffickers do not lead the communities for a dialogue but infuriate the situation in to a conflict so that they can continue with their illegal business.
The Afghans address their family disputes and inter family disputes to their traditional conflict solving unit named Shura. If the issue is linked with several villages then it is addressed to the Tribal Shura which is the regional governing body of each ethnic tribe. Seldom people address their grievances to the police, religious council, Community Development Council, commander (person powerful with arms) and political institutions.

**SHURA (TRIBAL COUNCIL)**

Shura is the traditional tribal Council for local governance. The village community is of tribal in nature. The Islam is the center of the community life. Mullah is the most respected in the common, places. Each village has elected chief named Karyadar. Shura is the Persian
name given for the traditional council for the local governance at each village and each ethnic tribe has its own council and the president of the Shura is called Karyadar. These karyadar are elected by the people and they can throw him out of the power. The villagers elect this leader by discussions. This is one of age old traditional institution at the community level. The traditional leader named Kariyadar takes care of the external affairs like any need or problem to be addressed to the District representatives or the line departments. Karyadar takes care of the internal affairs like land dispute, family dispute, problems in pasture land, water sharing in the main sources etc. In common the person elected as Karyadar belongs to a big family where there are many grown up adults and also the person should have good reputation. When asked the qualities expected from the Karyadar the people told that he must be honest, well informed person and also good character. Now this traditional leadership is slowly moving in to the hands of the CDC (Community Development Council).

CDC is a very latest phenomenon introduced by the present government to act on behalf of the people in the local village. But the traditional leaders become the chief in the CDCS also. The Karyadar is not a paid man. It is in practice that the villagers go to him to settle the disputes and the Karyadar takes the decision and if anyone disobeys he is handed over to the police. Karyadar is important in distribution of water from the canal.
LOSS OP TRADITIONAL PEACE MECHANISM FOR RESOLVING THE LOCAL CONFLICTS

The houses are located in the village according to the ethnic composition. For example the Tajiks live in a particular location and the Pashtuns live in a separate location. So each rural community has its own traditional committee named Shura or Karyadar with a president and a council of members. Due to war this indigenous problem solving mechanism has become powerless and it is taken over by the war lords of the area. Each tribe has a war lord according to the geographical location. The loss of this council is a loss since it is one of the committee through which the villagers solve their problems amicably. During when the Taliban captured power the non Pashtun tribes were forced to leave the village and many families left their village and migrated to their neighboring countries or to the nearby towns and so the existing society lost its net working to solve any problem. Their approach is usually based on arbitration, often combined with building up social pressure in order to ensure that the involved parties adhere to the solution. To be selected or accepted as an arbitrator, professional knowledge in conflict resolution techniques is secondary to social status based on personal reputation, age, influence in the community and lineage.
Afghans are of the opinion that they lost their hopes in bringing peace since till 1989 the year the Russia left Afghanistan there was attacks by the Majahideen movements supported by America and Pakistan and after they left the country faced a horrible civil war and there were several militant groups fighting among themselves and sabotaging the livelihood bases. All welcomed Taliban thinking that civil war would come to an end but Taliban gave space to terrorist movements and imposed self styled shariat law which was a treat to human rights and gender rights and the lives of Afghan were torn in to pieces. Again the advent of American army in to Afghanistan was looked with hopes and in the beginning NATO army was supported by Afghans but the attacks of NATO and ISAF on the civilians made the Afghans lost their hope in them. Though the new democratic parliament system was introduced and people exercised their franchise amidst the human bomb explosion by Taliban and there is fight between the national army and Taliban.

In the focus group discussions the Afghans long for peace and want to restart their lives with hopes. Irrespective of ethnic differences they spelt out that their young boys in the family had to migrate to neighboring countries to save their lives during the Taliban regime. The villagers opined that when they hear of any incidents of civilians being killed they feel very sad over this and these incidents create a negative feeling about peace. All barring ethnic differences want to
solve their problems through peace dialogue and no one want any
violent methods. They feel that since their country was caught
between the super powers in the world and millions were killed and
the whole country became stand still for three decades due to the
foreign forces and Afghans never liked violence. So the causes of the
conflict came through externally and simply the Afghans were
exploited in the conflict.

Their first priority is that the country should be free from
foreign invasions and the bomb blasts occur with the support from the
neighboring countries exclusively from Pakistan. The villagers feel that
they do not want any more bomb blasts in their country. They prefer
neither Russia nor America. They are of the opinion that education,
employment opportunities; hospital facilities will bring peace and
happiness in the communities. Due to the psychological fear they
cannot plan anything for their future or for their children.

When asked the question what they want from NATO and ISAF they
replied that the foreign army should not kill civilians and give
compensation to those who lost their beloved ones are totally ignored
by the Army as well as the government.

The villagers blame that their fate is to face war and live in a in
secured situation since the Afghan was never allowed to plan
independently and the villagers cannot say what is the interior aim of
the foreign forces in Afghanistan like interventions by neighboring
countries (mainly Pakistan and Iran), the role of international actors
.esp. the US forces) They feel that nothing is in their hands and they
take decisions outside Afghanistan and still they do not know when
the foreign (fighting) forces in Afghanistan would leave and who would
invade after them. They are of the opinion that International forces,
especially coalition forces supporting, rearming different groups and
make them fight against other Afghans.

The villagers have not heard of any initiatives for peace
initiatives either at the micro level or at that macro level. The conflict
at the village level was for agriculture land, sharing water and graze
land. They could not solve the problems amicably since their
traditional problem solving mechanisms through Shura has lost its
hold due to war and that position was replaced by the warlords. The
villagers welcomed the new parliamentary system introduced by
UNEMA but they want the Taliban and the anti government forces
threaten the people not to vote and many booths they exercise their
democratic franchise at the cost of their lives. The violent incidents
increase during the election and the ethnic sentiments play a vital role
in the election. The money and the hold of the vested interest play a
vital role in the election.

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civilians being killed they feel very sad over this and these incidents
create a negative feeling about peace.

Afghans feel that only a small elite participating in the decision-
making process with women hardly participating. Afghan men ask
according to our tradition we do not allow women to participate in any
social responsibility and it is practically not possible to involve the
women in governance and in decision making. Afghans irrespective of ethnic differences feel that nepotism prevails in all the rehabilitation projects and also in the Government organizations. A high degree of corruption which prevents people without contacts, with those in power, from getting into responsible positions. Corruption exists and become the accepted practice and it hinders the development. Unemployment prevails in the country but they counter the fake numbers given by the government which give a per capita income much too high.

The communities feel that the expectation of quick changes, not allowing the time needed to develop things in a realistic and workable way when the country faces the following acute problems. Lack of education, lack of awareness on peace, a large number of rural people live without any access to health services, unskilled and unemployed youth in Afghanistan. Especially a generation who has grown up in other countries as refugees with very minimum education and other opportunities.

Right from the Soviet occupation till today the Afghans have to migrate to the neighboring countries as refugees and many parents lost their young boys while migrating either shot dead while crossing or taken as a prisoner and spending life in the prison. All are of the opinion that the mental agony of the widows and mothers who lost their eldest son during the war has affected the women and the children. When asked the question why there are many women begging the answer was that they lost everything during war and
migrated to neighboring countries and when they came back they have to star their lives in the pavements near the mosque as beggars. The most pathetic condition is the status of the parents who have never heard of their children who went to other countries mainly to Iran and other western countries.

Local peace building work is currently being undertaken by a small number of national and international organizations in Afghanistan, with very positive impact in terms of the resolution and prevention of conflict, as will be examined later in this report. Some larger NGOs have also incorporated peace building into their broader development work; for instance, as part of the NSP. But localized peace building is not a component of the Interim Afghan National Development Strategy. What is currently being done is fragmented both geographically and structurally, and benefits only a tiny fraction of the Afghan population. Moreover, the overwhelming focus of donors remains on material and physical support, with visible results, rather than the promotion of social or institutional capacity-building at a local level.

**WAR LORDS**

Afghan had high expectation of the international intervention in their country; one of the most negative outcomes of the intervention has been a growing power for the warlord, who were totally marginalized or eliminated from the power and military scenes. Majority believe that the insecurity in Afghanistan today is not due to
mainly Taliban and Al Qaeda but the groups who has been rearmed and came into political and military scenes after US and coalition invasion of Afghanistan.

People feel that the implementation of parliamentary system and the Community development councils based on democracy have given space for the people to elect their leaders but people could not grasp and participate fully in the governing systems due to many practical obstacles like the existence of war lords in the system. Recognition of the rule of warlords by international, especially coalition forces, creation and supporting of small armed groups to fight against Taliban, which in itself is contradicting the democratic process.

RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

On the other hand there is a strong commitment shown by the donor countries on their pledges and support. This however has its backlashes as the lack of capacity in both Afghan and expatriate side affected the aid and reconstruction process. This coupled with the haste by the international community to speeding up their spending caused pouring money without prior planning and management capacity.

DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA

People welcomed the changes brought down by the media which contributed to raising awareness, whereby in rural areas especially the radio played an important role. The communication media developed by the government like radio, television have lots of positive changes in their lives since they are aware of what is going on in the
country and the war lords can not exploit the young boys for their self motivated interest,

EDUCATION

Through the rehabilitation programs by the United Nations the schools are rebuilt and access to education for boys and girls has increased, which is not just driven by the government but also by the desire of the people.

POPPY CULTIVATION

Regarding poppy cultivation the farmers are of the opinion that the growing poppy is easy because they receive easy informal credit from the merchants and they cannot earn much gain by growing other crops due to poor transportation and poor marketing tie up. They told that they grow poppy for their livelihood and they do not consume it. They are ignorant of the fact that the merchants make easy and big money out of poppy.

REHABILITATION

The rehabilitation projects being implemented by the government gives a relief by offering temporary employment but not sustainable opportunities. Physical development is taking place without tackling the root causes of the problems. Poverty still exists and Afghanistan is not self-reliant. Afghans want factories so that the young Afghans need not migrate.
While posing the question of what kind of rehabilitation or reform should happen in the country all are of the same thought that they want rehabilitation according to the culture and traditional because all the reforms imposed upon them by soviet union the land reform lead to the growth of war lords and communal and fundamental militant religious movements which gave space to America to grow militant movements and later these militant movements turned against each other and sabotaged the country. The effect was killing, bomb blasting, poverty, unemployment and migration. The Taliban was the brain child of Pakistani fundamentalist who wanted an ideal Islamic state which crippled the country and took back the country one century back and marginalized the women and the children were trained to fight. Now the America introduced the democratic system by which the government is being elected by the people and people could not exercise their voting power since they are threatened by the anti government forces.

There was no job available to them. The farmers were of the opinion that the grapes, dry grapes, pomegranates, nuts, and carpets which were exported to other countries before the war could not be cultivated in their farms. The producers lost the marketing link and that situation was exploited by the Pakistan merchants.
The villagers are of the opinion that the farming and agriculture sector is not at all sufficient to meet the basic food and sending their elder boys to near by towns or to near by countries alone can substantiate the family income. All participants are of the strong opinion that they want some cottage industries and they want skill education for their children. But when put forth before them the insecurity where no industrialists would venture in this country they blame their fate and openly comment that they are the most unfortunate people living in the world.